Interview with James Howe

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Foreign Assistance Series

JAMES HOWE

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Q: We're beginning a US Foreign Assistance Oral History Program interview with Mr. James Howe, known far and wide as Jim Howe, who spent many years with AID and also with its predecessor, ICA, and with whom I, Sam Butterfield, worked with great pleasure for many years off and on, starting in the International Division of the Bureau of the Budget. Jim served in Asia, in Latin America, in Africa, and in our own favorite pressure cooker, AID headquarters in Washington, DC. Jim worked with another celebrated Jim, Jim Grant, a number of times, and in fact, responded to Jim Grant's invitation to depart from AID in the early 1970s and join the Overseas Development Council, which Jim Grant was then heading. There, as in almost all of his other assignments and work with AID and international development, Jim Howe was a very thoughtful person, a very productive writer, and in that regard, we will attach to the final document a listing of Jim Howe's writings. I should also mention that Jim Howe was for me in my earliest years in international work, a role model, and I don't think I could have chosen better.

Jim, let's start where the Association suggests we start, which is when you were a wee lad: where that was and what influences there were in your life that may have partially led you toward your long, creative, and productive career in international work.

Early years, education and work experience

HOWE: Well, it started in a small farm community in southeastern Nebraska - Gage County, Nebraska. I was born on a farm and reared there. I used to look over the hills and wonder what was on the other side. That was my earliest interest in foreign affairs. To go all the way to my farm to Lincoln, Nebraska was foreign for me. I had a pretty routine childhood, a pleasant one. I had good parents and all.

Then I went off to college, first to a small teacher's college (Not that I intended to be a teacher, but that it was the cheapest place to go. This was the period of the drought and dust bowl and Depression, so we didn't have a lot of money.). I spent two years there and then went off to the University of Nebraska, where I did specialize in foreign affairs, although that seems very remote now. I remember that my focus was Latin America. I took Spanish, 99% of which is now gone. I got interested in government because there was an opportunity for a scholarship to the NIPA, the National Institute of Public Affairs, which eventually became the Pre-Service Program of the Civil Service. At that time, it was operated under private auspices, financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. So, I went to Washington and took that course for a year.

Q: What year was that, Jim?

HOWE: It was the year beginning July of 1994 that I spent a year in that program. Mid-way in the year, part of the program was that we were to be taken on by a federal agency. I happened to be taken on by the Federal Power Commission in personnel and administration. But that was interrupted because the United Nations conference was being held in San Francisco, the one that launched the United Nations. The White House had given orders to all agencies that they were to respond- If asked, they were to give any of their people to go out and help at this thing. I was happily drafted to go out and served as an “order of the day officer,” which meant that you were responsible for getting the room for the commissions and committees to meet, getting it in order - to make sure

there was drinking water and that there was a secretary there to take down the notes, that the interpreters came, and so forth and so on. That really got me very interested in international affairs. I remember seeing and opening the door for such dignitaries as Molotov. That was a big thing. And Alger Hiss was there. In any event, that was a very impressive thing for me. One of our jobs, every third night or so, required that we stay up until late in order to get the order of the day out for the next day. That meant running around to a lot of different officers and getting their items for agenda and getting the agenda prepared for the next day. So, that was really a launching into foreign affairs.

I went from there to the Office of the Overseas Foreign Liquidation Commission. It was called. At any rate, it was the outfit which disposed of the war materials that were left overseas by the US military. I worked there, again, in personnel matters for a year or so, after which my wife and I went off to Harvard, where I had a scholarship to take a degree in public administration, or as they called it, economics and government policy. That was, again, impressive, although I'm not sure I ever really applied any of that to my work in AID in subsequent years, except as it knocked some of the sharp corners off of me, and prepared me generally. It might have helped broaden what was naturally a limited horizon of a Nebraska farm boy.

Q: Fearlessness about taking on the large issues.

HOWE: Yes, we sure took them on - right. We straightened out Aristotle and Plato and people like that. I was taken on to the Bureau of the Budget, as it was then called, in the federal government in the international division.

Q: What year?

HOWE: That was June of 1950. Meanwhile, I had acquired a wife. Carol and I were married in 1945 and we had great fun, going to Harvard. In the fall of 1950, we had our first child. I was in the international division of the Bureau of the Budget. My assigns were the appropriation for the Foreign Service and for USIA (at different times, not all at once),

and for the Point Four Program and so forth. That was a very broad kind of exposure to foreign affairs, worldwide and an inch deep. We as budget examiners got into their programs with a great relish, as you well know. There, one of the big influences on me was Sam Butterfield, with whom I worked for several years.

Program officer in ICA - 1955 - and Vietnam - 1959

In 1955, I took a job with ICA(as AID was called then), in the Central Planning Office, which we called “DDP,” (Deputy Director for Program or for Planning). DDP put together the programs to be requested of the Congress each year and did other kinds of planning work. One example comes to mind that was interesting. It was probably in about 1956 or 57. We had a new Director, a businessman from Colorado who knew little about foreign matters. Someone called to his attention that the US had collected billions of dollars of foreign currencies as a part of the deal we made with host countries when we sold them surplus agricultural products (PL 480). He conceived the idea that, with these billions, we could meet the needs of the developing countries without asking Congress for fresh appropriations. So he invited three businessmen to come to Washington for a month or two to look into the matter and advise him. I don't remember all of their names. One was Bill Bristol of Bristol-Myers. Another was Strauss, head of an investment company in NYC and the third man I don't remember. My job was to squire them around town to all of the relevant experts so that they could gather the facts and come up with a report. They were very enthusiastic when they got the basic facts about the great volume of foreign currency “owned” by the US and set off with great relish to save the taxpayer the burden of funding the foreign aid effort. I tried to quell their enthusiasm by pointing out that: a) money is not a resource; it is a claim on resources; b) this money was only “ours” on condition that we use it in the country (with some small exceptions) and that we use it with their permission. Since what they needed from the US was not a claim on their local resources, but actual imported resources (either imports of goods or of technicians and other services), there was really no way (with small exceptions) to use the local currencies to substitute for these resources. Bill Bristol saw the point right away. The others took a month or two

longer to give up the hope of using the currencies to alleviate the US budget burden. I wrote the first several drafts of their report and, with some compromises and considerable disappointment, they accepted it. This was a fun project. I stayed with DDP until 1959, when I took a job overseas in Vietnam as the program officer. It was the program officer who put together the annual program for each year. It also had the training program assigned to it. This sort of cut my eye teeth on what we do overseas because Vietnam was a big program - 230 or 240 million dollars, as I recall in those days, a big part of which was the program to import commercial products to be sold on the market in Vietnam to generate a local currency to be used to support the military effort. I remember that I got into a difference of view with the military because it was very clear that we were importing more than our need for local currency. The reason I said that was because we used an exchange rate, if I remember correctly, of 35 piasters to a dollar. All other markets were '70s and '80s and the black market was over 100. But for us, it was 35. Why? Because we had agreed to it. Now, what did they do with the dollars? The folks who imported goods with them were able to sell the commodities and what did they do with the local currency? They converted some of it into dollars. Their third largest export after rice and rubber was of US dollars to Geneva and such places to put it in bank accounts. We could have had the same effect, I remember arguing, if we had just changed the exchange rate to 70 or 78 or so. We still could have generated the local currency that they needed at half of the cost to us. But that idea didn't sell well in those days. This was an aid program totally dominated by the military effort that we were slipping into.

So, I stayed there for a couple of years. Other formative things or major events that loom? I did become exposed to the different view that one takes in the field from what one takes in Washington. I remember feeling desperately the need for AID in Washington to rotate their people out to the field so that they would have that point of view. Some of the views in Washington, I thought, were terribly unrealistic. That was a thought which grew in my mind in the subsequent assignments, both in Washington and overseas, this wide gap between

the world view from the field and the world view from Washington. You'll hear more of that, I'm sure, as we talk on.

Q: I recall a comment you made to me once about technical assistance. You said all the planning was fine, but the thing that really mattered was whether you had a highly competent advisor on the technical assistance side.

HOWE: Yes, that really was the critical thing. Most of our planning went into our files and I don't think there was a large transfer of knowledge from that to the host country. Of course, that was the purpose of technical assistance, the transfer of knowledge, and the host country didn't pay an awful lot of attention to the paperwork side.

Q: Were there any people there or any individuals, US or other, that you recall with particular favor or interest?

HOWE: Well, there was Hanging Sam Williams, who ran the MAAG, the Military Advisory Assistance Program. He used to say, “When I look into the morning and I am shaving myself, I say to myself, 'You're going to meet General Giap (the military chief of Vietnam). You're going to meet him on the field of battle. You're going to meet him on a field of battle with tanks and planes and all those things. You're going to have to take him.'” This showed how completely General Williams misunderstood his assignment. But I have other, better impressions than that, like Ambassador Durbrow, who was a great guy, and Arthur Gardner, who was our Mission Director there, and a variety of people. One doctor, Doctor Boyton, who was from Maine, put together a list of pharmaceuticals which, taken together, couldn't do any harm, but were designed to treat some of the more common ailments. He would give them to his barefoot doctors. They would go out on the trail. He taught them the rudiments of how to diagnose these very common disorders and how to treat them. I thought that was very effective. It didn't have any long-term, lasting thing, but it certainly served a very acute humanitarian need at the time.

Q: You remembered something which I thought was very important to get into the record because of its singularly personal impact. So, without further ado, we will rewind to Vietnam and when you were there in your first overseas assignment.

HOWE: One of the places that we had in Vietnam was a pretty decent golf course about four or five miles out of the city. I would go there on Saturdays and play golf. One day, we were playing golf. We had played the first nine holes and then, as was traditional, being hot weather and all, we would go into the little clubhouse there and drink an orange soda or something to quench our thirst and visit the men's room and go back out and go on with our golf. Well, we had gone through that ritual and we were standing on the ninth tee, which was about 80 or 90 yards from the clubhouse when the clubhouse blew up, right straight up in the air it blew. It turned out that some little guy was hired by the Viet Cong to go down and put a plastique bomb under the men's urinal. Then he had left. So, in the aid program for a couple of days after that, people go around asking other people, “Did you hear how far Jim Howe was from the plastique bomb?” They would respond with a gesture, “About this far. No, about that far.”

While we're on the subject of personal danger, I didn't have any intense personal danger, but another episode-

Q: That was very close.

HOWE: That was a close one. We had four kids there, little bitty ones, and we had taught them that, in the event of any gunfire, they were to hit the ground quickly. Well, there was the attempted coup against the president, Ngo Diem Dinh. There was a lot of gunfiring near our house and we were up the bedroom, Carol and I. We raced downstairs and here were our kids, all flat on the floor, just as they had been told. One of them was on the stairway and he had dropped right there on the stairway, as he had been told. That was an interesting episode, too.

Q: Indeed. They had learned their lessons well.

HOWE: They had learned their lessons well.

Still on Vietnam and the personal danger sort of thing, we did lose a number of people. We lost one of our malaria technicians, who had been shot by the Viet Cong.

Q: From Vietnam, you came back to Washington?

Deputy Chief USAID/Brazil - 1962

HOWE: Yes, briefly, and then on to Brazil. I came back to Washington in, I guess, about '61. I spent a year in Washington in the Planning Office of Asia, and then off to Brazil as the Deputy Chief of the AID mission to Brazil. That was 1962.

Q: Another big mission.

HOWE: That was a big mission, yes.

Q: What are some of the highlights or particular impacts on you of your Brazil experience?

HOWE: First, I got there as the Deputy. Then, for a period of two or three months, I guess, I was acting because Len Saccio, who had at an earlier period, been a Republican, got sacked for the sin of being a Republican in a Democratic administration, which was not to be tolerated, and out he went. He was a good guy. I served as acting for a period of time. Then Jack Kubisch came down, a very strong guy, another good guy, as the Mission Director and I was the Deputy there.

Q: Could I interrupt for just a minute to put a note in the record? Jack Kubisch was one of the products of Operation Tycoon. I'm sure why they chose somebody like Jim Howe, an absolutely solidly grounded AID officer, as his Deputy was because he was brand new to

the agency. He needed a Jim Howe to make sure he didn't get too far off the track or went tearing off in the wrong direction.

HOWE: He was a very careful operator and a man of good judgment. Maybe it was of some benefit to him to have me there. So, we served there for two years. My big impression there, I remember that there was always pressure from the State Department to use our AID programs in ways that would affect the elections. I remember making a list and consulting with people including, particularly people on the political side in the embassy about it, of what are the more important things that are going to affect the outcome of this coming election? Jo#o Goulart was then the president. We made a list of about 20. The AID program didn't make the list of important factors. And yet the State Department was convinced that the way in which we gave aid and to whom would make a big difference in the elections. That was one big impression that I had.

Q: Was there a serious effort to try to influence the elements of the AID program or the timing of this or anything of that order?

HOWE: Don't press me for details on that.

Q: Right. It's not fair. It's a long time ago.

HOWE: It's a long time ago, but my impression that I took away was, yes, that they did. They did have a view that, if we did certain things in certain areas, it would impact favorably. I'm not sure that they were successful in changing the direction of our program. It's kind of hard to change this great battleship, the direction in which it's going. But in any event, that was their view.

Another view, which didn't come from State, but really from AID headquarters itself was the thought that we could have great influence in the policies of the government using our aid program. It turned out that we could get them to sign things saying that they accepted our policies. This had to do with things like inflation and agrarian reform and things like

that . But they weren't serious about it. Our aid carrot wasn't big enough. Even though that was one of AID's largest programs in those days, particularly because of our emphasis on trying to help the northeast of Brazil, even though it was a very big program, it still was a tiny fraction of their GNP, of the disposable income that the government had. It was very important to certain individuals, guys who were trying to get something done, roads or hospitals or whatever it may be, to get the dollop of American aid for this particular project, but to the government, to try to influence central policies, fiscal policies, monetary policies, it was so fatuous. Somehow, AID remained impervious to that insight. This is one of the things that sort of carried over. I had it again in Africa. I certainly saw it over and over again in the 10 years that I was with the Overseas Development Council. There was a notion on the part of AID that they were very much more central in the affairs of the host country they were helping than reality would have permitted.

Q: Right. After you and I both were doing other things, the Reagan administration resurrected that as a particularly strong effort to try to be influential on policy.

HOWE: Of course, the Congress was about as guilty as AID. A lot of the things that we tried to do were because of the “statutory requirements.” At one time, there were 70 or 80 statutory requirements that had to be satisfied before we could give aid. They became a burden, but that didn't stop the Congress from insisting, for example, “are they spending too much on the military,” if that's one of the statutory requirements. You have to go through a process to make sure they're not spending too much on the military. “Are they doing anything bad about the environment?” You have to make sure that they straighten up and do the things there that the United States has never been able to do. But, by God, if we can't do it at home, we're going to make sure those guys do it overseas. So, the Congress was far more arrogant than AID. AID's arrogance, I think, was a kind of a reflection of what their bosses on the Hill wanted them to do.

Q: When one testifies before the Congress, one said, “Yes, we'll do that.”

HOWE: Central AID, I didn't think, ever made an effort - and maybe it would have been a quixotic effort - to educate the Congress. Our great friends down there on the Hill really never got educated. They were very much in favor of AID and they supported us, but they would load statutory requirements on the poor aid vehicle also.

Q: Are you ready to leave Brazil? I'd love to go on and on.

HOWE: People there in Brazil... Yes, we had some great ones in Brazil.

Q: The language... You had taken Spanish at Nebraska.

HOWE: Yes.

Q: And in Brazil, you spoke Portuguese.

HOWE: I spoke Portuguese in Brazil. So, we took weeks (I've forgotten how many) at the Foreign Service Institute, learning Portuguese. We got to where we could find our way to the men's room in Portuguese, barely. But it was a language that we did use down there, more socially than in business. As is true all over the world, their English is so much better than our language. Besides, if it isn't, they'd still like to practice it. So, they tend to push you into that.

In Vietnam (staying with language, but jumping countries a bit), we had to learn French. They knew that we couldn't find the men's room after two years of studying Vietnamese. It was too difficult. So, we learned French, which they knew quite well. That is to say, the Vietnamese officials all were good French speakers. But again, they preferred to speak English. We had trouble with their accent in French, in any event. Language is awfully important and I did admire the guys who became really fluent in the local language. Some of them did become fluent in Vietnamese, particularly guys that were sent up country and spent time up county.

Q: CORDS, was it?

HOWE: Yes. After my time, it became known as CORDS.So, we're in Brazil, and I guess we're about ready to leave Brazil. It was a big experience, a big program, a large staff.

Q: What was the program aimed at or what things was the program aimed at?

HOWE: The biggest part of it was the northeast, which was the drought-ridden part of the country. We had a special sub-mission up there. Of course, there was the usual amount of wrangling between Rio, which was the headquarters, and the northeast office. It consisted of agrarian reform and of an import program.

Q: Aimed at local currency generation again?

HOWE: No, it wasn't really. It was more stuff for industry. We had a training program for industry in the Sao Paulo area of Brazil, Sao Paulo being a great, big city, kind of like Chicago, dirty and powerful. I remember talking with the merchants, that is to say, the businessmen, the industrialists, in the Sao Paulo area about our training program. We had a technical training program to try to get people from the various parts of the county up on the rudiments of technical work. They said, I remember, that they didn't think much of our program, that they felt more comfortable taking a guy fresh from the northeast and training him themselves because the training that we gave them was sort of generic, broad training. We couldn't know exactly the needs of each factory. It failed in applicability. They thought what it did bestow on the trainee was arrogance. The trainees thought they knew something. These merchants said they would rather take workers in and train them from scratch. Of course, this is not a new thought. We find it here, too, that although we set a great store by education in general, usually, when you get on the job, you start over and learn what the job has for you, rather than drawing, directly, at least, on any of the material that you got in education.

Q: From our own early experiences.

HOWE: Yes. So, there's much more rich material in Brazil, but it doesn't present itself to my sieve-like mind, which hasn't thought about these things for 15 years. It's been so full of activities that have nothing to do with foreign assistance.

HOWE: Back to Brazil, Link Gordon is a guy who deserves a word or two. He was the ambassador there. Again, one of those great minds that just sops up things so fast. He spoke the language just by exposing himself to it.

Q: He didn't come with that?

HOWE: He didn't come with the language, no. He got it by being there. He learned up things fast. He was terribly courageous. When they asked him if he would come onto a talk show talking Portuguese, sure, he came onto a talk show. Probably butchered the language, but it's all right. He communicated. He played cello. This was a kind of a man bites dog thing for the Brazilians, for an ambassador to play the cello, so he was in a little string quartet and he would play around. I'm told that he played kind of atrociously, but he was an ambassador and it's not every day-

Q: The remarkable thing is not that he played well, but that he played at all. It's like a dog playing checkers.

HOWE: Right. But he was a strong guy. One tiny vignette: one day, we were in his office having our weekly staff meeting. We were talking about Joao Goulart, the then-president. Some question came up. I don't remember what it was, but he said, “I've got to talk to him,” so he buzzed his secretary and he said, “Get the president on the line.” He said, “Maybe you guys better get out and let me talk with him.” So, we all got out in the waiting room. He came out maybe 20 minutes later and he had the strangest look on his face. He said, “Guess what I've been doing?” We said, “What?” He said, “I've been talking to Jack Kennedy.” The secretary got the wrong president on the line and Link said, “Oh, I'm sorry,

Mr. President. I asked her to get the President. I was thinking of Joao Goulart. I'm sorry. I won't bother you." "No, wait a minute, Link," Kennedy said, "I want to talk about Brazil." So, they talked about Brazil for 20 minutes. Do you remember who the Brazil desk was in those days? I can see his face, but I can't say his name. I remember him saying, "We've got the highest paid country desk on earth. It's the President of the United States. There isn't a two week period that he doesn't call me and ask about this or that item on the Brazil program, for heaven's sake."

Q: President Kennedy?

HOWE: Yes.

Q: How really extraordinary. I wonder if, the first time he did it, the guy said, "Oh, yes? So's your old man" or something on that order. It happened a couple of times in AID, I know. Kennedy would call and nobody would believe it.

Well, these are good recollections, and constructively thoughtful, as I knew they would be. From Brazil? Sabbatical at Senior Seminar - 1966

HOWE: From Brazil to the War College, a sort of a relaxing experience. Did you go to the War College?

Q: I didn't go to the War College. I went to something called the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy, which was roughly the same thing.

HOWE: Right. That was just a lot of fun and, again, a very broadening experience. Someone once asked me if I thought Uncle Sam was getting his money's worth by sending us to the War College and I said, "Well, for those few people who are going to become President of the United States, it's excellent training." But it's a net that you cast pretty broad to get that one fish. But it was a lot of fun because it's nice to be trained to be the President of the United States. We thought lofty thoughts. It was fun to be

exposed to the military and the military point of view. I can't really say that Uncle Sam got his money's worth, except in terms of R&R. If you want to defend it on the grounds of that, after a certain number of years, a person needs a year of R&R, which is spent in a fairly constructive way - not terribly related to the next job, but related certainly to the development of his personality, that's a good way to do it.

Q: One of the early reasons for having that and for having people like you there, I was told, was that the military wanted their senior officers (colonels, lieutenant colonels) to be broadened with a lot of policy considerations before they became general officers, where they would begin to perhaps occasionally help address some of them. So, you may have been of more value to them than you realized.

HOWE: Yes, there may have been a leveling effect of the folks that came from State Department and from Commerce and other places in government over there. But I don't really begrudge that time, or even as a taxpayer, that money. It wasn't that much. Good experience.

Q: It is a great continuing institution.

HOWE: Right.

Q: From there then, you stayed in Washington for a time?

In Washington with Latin American Bureau - 1964 and State Department Policy Planning Staff - 1966

HOWE: Yes. I went from there back to the Latin American Bureau, where I was the program officer for that Bureau for a period of, I guess, a couple of years.

Q: A very responsible job.

HOWE: It was a good job and a very intense job. There, I saw it from Washington's end and I remember railing against Washington's myopia and delusions of grandeur, thinking that they were really in command of what was going on overseas and trying to inject a little sense of realism into the minds of my fellow workers. I don't think I had a massive influence on what went on in that.

One little incident that was kind of fun was that Lyndon Baines Johnson was our President in those days and he had an appendicitis operation. He was out at the Navy hospital. Dean Rusk had to go out and see him. One of the things he had on his agenda was a general approval of our aid program. We didn't think that the President would get into it at all, but the President did get into it. He said, “Now, everything they do in Latin America, I want to relate to agriculture or education or health and I don't want any of this other crap. Just those three things in the aid program.” This was President Johnson. Dean Rusk came back with those instructions to us. We were very busy for the next few months, really, deciding whether the roads that we did were related to health or to education or to agriculture. So, we did a massive reprogramming. There was a certain amount of cynicism. I mean, how do we do reprogramming when those decisions are made in Brazil and we are the tail on that dog? Again, the myopia, these strange delusions of grandeur that we have.

Q: Change the wallpaper.

HOWE: We changed the wallpaper, that's what we did.

I got a proposition then to go from program officer in the Latin American Bureau over to join the Policy Planning Council of the State Department, a very unusual offer and a very unusual assignment for someone in AID.

Q: It's a great honor.

HOWE: Whatever. I found myself swimming upstream over there. These guys were advising the Secretary of State. My assignment was the underdeveloped world, not every aspect of it, obviously, but only the development aspect of the underdeveloped world. So, I got a chance to write things there and get paid for it, which was fun. Basically, the things I was writing were, for the most part, the justification of the aid program. On a related topic, I remember, we did a paper, or I did a draft of a paper, on our relations with Cuba, saying that I thought we were making ourselves look silly around the world by trying to cordon off that nation and starve it to death because it didn't do what we wanted it to do, didn't have the kind of system that we wanted. That sank rather rapidly to the bottom of the sea, that thought. It didn't get anywhere at all.

Q: It still hasn't.

HOWE: And still hasn't, no. It's amazing how difficult it is for us to see the world as the world sees itself. Then the Policy Planning people, the director of the staff- Was it Walt Rostow then? No, Walt had passed onto greater things over in the White House. It was Henry Owen who was then the Policy Planning director. I remember, he sent a little note up to the Secretary, saying, “Would you like us to take a look at Vietnam down the road?” Our job was supposed to be looking down the road a few years at what things were going to be like so that we could not just react to day to day events. So Henry asked, “Would you like us to take a sort of long view of Vietnam?” The Secretary sent back a little terse note and he said, “I spend more time on that country than all of you put together. I don't need your help.”

Q: Wow! Thank you very much.

HOWE: Otherwise, I'm trying to think of applicability of the work there that I did for the next year or two.

Q: I have a recollection of a paper you wrote somewhere and perhaps it was there, about the role of the American churches, perhaps responding to their appearances before the Congress or something. Am I remembering correctly?

HOWE: If you are, I hope I was favorable to them because my feeling now toward the work of the American churches was that it was selfless work and that it was solid stuff, some of it, and was fairly well-received.

Q: So, the Policy Planning stint was, what, a couple years?

HOWE: Yes, it was from '66 to '69.

Q: Were there some things you worked on there that you feel some enthusiasm about or things that got your motor running? Zbigniew Brzezinski wasn't there?

HOWE: He was on the Council, yes. That was a rewarding experience, really, to get exposed to this guy, who had such a quick mind. They all did. They were bright people. Walt Rostow was a bright guy. Henry Owen was a real shining star. They were all pretty bright people on this thing.

Q: It must have been a great experience.

HOWE: It was. We would meet at least weekly as a Council.

Was it during that time that I was sent back to Vietnam? No, I think I've missed that episode. That was fascinating. That was probably why I was asked to come over to the Policy Planning Council. This is back now to about 1961 or 1962 in the Kennedy era. Walt Rostow and General Maxwell Taylor were asked by President Kennedy to go out on a mission to Vietnam to decide what we ought to be doing about Vietnam. So, they pulled together a team of military experts and intelligence experts and then they decided they'd better have an economist. Since I had just returned from Vietnam as the program officer,

they asked me to go along. That was another big experience. I can remember arguing or trying to educate Walt Rostow about the exchange of dollars for foreign currency through the medium of bringing in materials, selling them on the market, generating the currency. I was amazed at the fact that he seemed to regard this as new information. But I don't think I made a sale. I was again trying to sell the idea that we could save a bundle of money. Also, I was worried about the outflow of dollars into these private accounts. But we went to Vietnam and we visited with people, a high order of folks, particularly on the military side. Then, we found ourselves in Hong Kong and in Thailand and in Cambodia, all trying to develop a recommendation to what we ought to do in Vietnam. I was very much on the edge of those things because they were highly secret, obviously, but I saw something of them. We then went to the Philippines, to the military base there.

We spent maybe four or five days writing our report to the President. Again, I made inputs, but I didn't get consulted about the big things, that is to say, should we widen the war in Vietnam? Do you remember the book, The Ugly American?

Q: Yes.

HOWE: Do you remember Colonel Hillandale?

Q: Yes.

HOWE: I met the model for Colonel Hillandale there. He was on our team, actually, for the part of the time that we were out there. His name was Ed Lansdale. In fact, we roomed together the three or four nights that we were there. What an impressive character he was. Do you remember the T.V. program “Mash?”

Q: Yes.

HOWE: Do you remember the CIA colonel that would march in and make them all straighten up and fly right, who always carried the flag with him? That was Colonel

Lansdale. Honestly, Ed Lansdale was a powerful guy. While we were there, at the air base two or three hours from Manila, Ed Lansdale had sent down word to the ambassador, “May I come down and see some of my old friends?” The ambassador sent back up word, “No, you can't. You stay there. You're going to cause trouble if you come down here.” So, what happened, a pilgrimage emerged from Manila of people coming up to see Ed Lansdale, up at Clarke Air Base.

Q: What an extraordinary thing?

HOWE: Yes.

Q: What a perceptive ambassador.

HOWE: Yes. I don't even know who the ambassador was now. At any rate, this was very pleasant interlude, in a way, somewhat tension-ridden, but fairly pleasant. We got invited to the White House to meet with the President and deliver our report to him. He said nice things to us and we were dismissed. I never quite knew what was in the report. I had a general idea, but I hadn't seen the report. I think what it said was that, if you get involved, you're likely to get involved with China, so be tentative about it. It turns out, we weren't tentative. We got involved. But I'm not sure Kennedy would have gotten involved if he had lived.

Q: That remains one of the great question marks.

HOWE: Yes.

Q: We skipped back to a very interesting vignette and you were completing your Policy Planning staff assignment. To link back again, that made you the sort of visible talent that caused an invitation to come your way (and to AID) for you to join the Policy Planning Council.

HOWE: Probably, yes. That and Henry Owen. Henry and I had worked together on the Development Loan Fund in the 1950s. So, Henry was Deputy Chief, and Walt Rostow, who was the Director of the Policy Planning Council, invited me to come over. But I expect Henry put him up to it. But the fact that Walt and I had had that period of a couple weeks together at least made him remember who I was and that sort of thing.

Creation of the Development Loan Fund - 1950s

Q: Let's go back to the 1950s and the DLF. What was your role in setting up the DLF (Development Loan Fund)?

HOWE: You're scraping the bottom of a rusty barrel.

Q: Should it come forward, it could be added.

HOWE: I do remember just that we wrote lots of papers about it. I was kind of a conduit from some of the people in AID to Henry.

Q: Henry's role at that time was what?

HOWE: He was in the State Department on the Policy Planning staff and he took an interest in the DLF. In fact, he always had a big interest in development. That was one of his focuses. I just want to stop and say that he's another genius, not quite the stature of Jim Grant, but close.

Q: Do you want to say a little more about him?

HOWE: That does it. That sums it up.

Q: Fast forward then to the latter mid-60s. When you moved back into AID from the Policy Planning Council...

Appointment as Regional Director USAID program for East Africa - 1969-71

HOWE: Then I went to Africa. I have an interesting story about getting to Africa. I was going out as a Director, so therefore, I had to have White House clearance, clearance by the Republican National Committee. One day, I got called down to our Chief of Administration's office. Maybe his name will come back as we talk. It was not a career man. It was a Republican who transferred over there for that purpose.

Q: Deputy Administrator.

HOWE: Yes, Deputy Administrator. He said, “Jim, I have a problem about your clearance. We have 10 cases over there waiting for clearance. Nine of the 10 are Democrats. One is an independent. The Republican National Committee is raising hell about that. Would you be willing to just register Republican or just tell me you registered Republican or something so that I can get your name through this bunch of people?” I said, “Well, let me think about it.” I went up and I called Carol. I said, “Carol, this is the proposition.” Our son had been sent to school in Geneva because we were going to be in Africa. We were told there wasn't a school for him there. We were told wrongly, but... In any event, I said to her, “All I have to do is just say, 'Call me a Republican.'” She exploded. “Oh, no,” she said, “You will not do that. That's absolutely outrageous!” So, I sat down and I wrote - the Deputy Administrator didn't quite make it - a little note and I said, “You know, I understand that both parties do this. It's a part of our tradition that you have to meet the needs of the parties. That's fine. But in this case, it's more destructive because we have a Civil Service and a Foreign Service that are not supposed to let those things influence your career. Along comes an administration which says, 'If you change your party, you get a promotion within the system.' So, they're not saying that it's a gate to let you into the system, which we've always had, but it's how you fare within the system. Whether you get an assignment or not depends on your politics. That could be very destructive because, way back in 1924 or so, we passed the Civil Service Act, which was supposed to put an end to that kind of thing. I sent it down to him.” I swear, it wasn't a half an hour before he called me.

He said, “Jim, how many people have you shown this to?” I said, “Well, I sent a copy to Rudd Poats.” Then I capriciously said, “And one to Jerry Klutz.” Do you remember who he was (the Washington Post reporter on federal affairs)? He said, “Well, don't show it to anybody else.” Of course, he understood I was kidding about Jerry Klutz. So, a day later, I got cleared to go to Africa.

Q: Isn't that a nice story?

HOWE: Yes, but I don't know what happened to those other nine guys. So, off I went to Africa.

Q: To where in Africa?

HOWE: I went to Nairobi as the Director of the USAID program to the East African Community. There had been some empire builders before me. Sam Butterfield, I think, was involved.

Q: Oh, surely not!

HOWE: Anyway, the program that I had was about 50% regional and about 50% fake regional. That is, make like region.

Q: Sam was involved in facilitating the fake region from Dar Es Salaam. That's true, it was sort of a plot.

HOWE: I was Director of the AID mission to the East African Community, which consisted of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. I was not the Director of the AID missions to those individual countries. There was a Director to Uganda and an AID mission to Kenya, and one to Tanzania. So, there were four of us out there. I was not in a supervisory capacity over the other three. They ran the national programs and I ran the Community programs, except the Community programs went well beyond those programs that were run by the East African Community. The East African Community was a fairly strong organization

for a multi-country organization. Usually, they don't do well. In the end, this one also did not do well. But it certainly was pretty vigorous in those days. It ran the airline, the railroads, much of the agrarian research, the university and so forth and so on. It was a pretty powerful governmental institute.

Q: The common currency had been broken up by that time?

HOWE: Yes.

Q: The East Africa shilling was no longer in existence.

HOWE: Right. It was not interchangeable. There were three national currencies. There were not major problems getting across the border, although there were some interesting episodes there that are probably not worth reporting.

We had a well-developed program. I got acquainted with some fine American technicians, really some of the best that we were sending overseas. In the agriculture field, we had the University of Colorado State that was running some good programs. They had some colleagues from Germany. There was a German program there. They fit very well together. We had a veterinarian project there and I remember that we were being told by, I think it was one of the German technicians, he said, “You know, the East Africans and the British think of these things differently than the Americans and the Germans do. They don't have any animals at their veterinary school. They just teach the theory of veterinary medicine. But they don't like to have animals. Of course, we insisted, and the Americans from the University of Colorado insisted you've got to have animals if you're going to have a veterinary school.” So, that was an interesting insight.

While we're on interesting insights, as distinct from the aid program itself, the examinations that schoolchildren had to get the baccalaureate (which was a little bit more than the equivalent of a 12th grade education), were all collected and sent off to London for scoring. One fall came and the kids who had taken their tests months earlier hadn't gotten

any reply. They began to make inquiries about it. Lo and behold, it turns out that the examinations were all found in a storage area in the airport in London, where they had been lost. This raised a great hue and cry. Suddenly, the veil was lifted from this thing and the public in Africa realized that their exams were not only composed in London, but were printed in London, and then sent back to London for scoring. They began to say, “Let's look at these exams. Who cares who won the Battle of This or the Battle of That, which only involved the French and the British? Isn't there something we can teach our kids that relates more to life here in Africa?” That was a fortunate accident that happened because it caused a great debate. The result was obvious, that they decided that “We'd better make our education system more relevant to life here in Africa.” What an insight. It takes those little accidents.

Q: Wonderful story.

I want to get just a little bit of background on the East African Community, since I was there during the '60s and left just about the time from Tanzania.

HOWE: It was fairly well before I came because Nelson was therein functioning.

Q: The East African Community that you went to be AID's representative to was still pretty strong when you got there and filled with very good people, probably the best, because (or partly because) it was what remained of what had been British East Africa, in which the regional view was the principal governmental view. Often, it was the same as the Kenya view, but not always. All the infrastructure and all that-

HOWE: The mail was delivered-

Q: The whole bit was set up as East African entities.

HOWE: It was probably the premiere experience in multi-governments in the world. The Mekong Valley, I don't think, was as important as this.

Q: For decades, it was a very successful thing. Also, about three or four years before your arrival in East Africa, AID was seized with one of its fashions: regionalism. Ambassador Corry, ex-ambassador to Ethiopia, went around Africa and wrote up a report. That became dogma. Country missions, except in a very few places where we had a high strategic interest such as, of course, Ethiopia, should simply be phased down, if not out. We should have programs that promote regional knitting because that clearly is what Africa needed. So, that's where Carol Hinman in Kenya and Will Muller in Uganda and Sam Butterfield in Tanzania (I forget who was in Somalia at that time and who was in Ethiopia) would get together regularly because we had been commanded to do that and think regionally. We would think regionally of what could we tie together in an apparent way that would appear regional so that things wouldn't disappear that were otherwise useful. So, we fudged, but for a higher cause.

HOWE: You wanted to get things done and, if Washington demanded a certain package, you gave them the package.

Q: In addition, we didn't want our empires cut. Nobody likes that. Back to you, Jim. So, there you are. The British East Africa thing always got the best people, that's the other thing about it. Among the Africans, they got the best.

HOWE: Yes, they did have superb staff.

Q: It was just marvelous, yes.

HOWE: Well, it was beginning to fray at the edges by the time we got there. The university had decided or were in the process of deciding they wanted national universities then, rather than the University of East Africa.

I must tell you this little vignette. The African government said, “We want these ex-pats from Britain who are here in high government places to stay here for as long as they are needed. But we want to put Africans in these jobs as soon as they are trained.

What we would like to do is ask each of them to write a plan for the Africanization of his position." There followed some amusing little episodes. Many of them wrote the descriptions, Africanization position papers which coincided with their eligibility for retirement. I remember that the guy who was in a high position in the railroad wrote a position which concluded that it would take 21 years for his position to be ready for Africanization - a time that coincided exactly with his eligibility for retirement. He had it all laid out and the Africans were so amused by this. They loved that story.

But it was a great experience in the culture of Britain and the strength of the British, the wonderful colonialists who went out there and lived and lived dangerously. You must have gotten there very close to the end of the Mao Mao period. In fact, it may have still been going on when you got there, I'm not sure. We were only a few years later. It was wonderful to meet these sturdy colonialists who had been out there. They still felt a little betrayed by Britain because what really put an end to the British Empire in East Africa there was not the African Mao Mao beating the British colonialists on the field of battle. It was that the conscience of the British at home had been raked over by the African intelligentsia who went to London and preached to them about what they were doing. That was such a remarkable thing. It spoke well to me for the whole British society, that they moved against their own people and said, "This is wrong and we're going to pull out of there and let the Africans be Africans."

Q: Nice point.

HOWE: It was wonderful also that so many white British decided to be Africans. They were all given that choice. I'm telling you what you know, but what this record doesn't. They were all given a choice as to whether they wanted to be Africans or be British. One of the sad things about it was that, in the process of colonialization, so many Asians who were brought over there were given, in effect, British Empire status. When they were given that choice, they opted to be British, but couldn't get into England after that because there

were too many of them. Britain did have to close the gates on them and let them get in the immigration queue to come in. Well, I'm wandering pretty badly.

Q: No, those are important stories. Absolutely, the state of the Asians in East Africa is a extraordinary story. You find many, of course, now, here in the Pacific Northwest.

HOWE: Of those Asians?

Q: Of those Asians. In Canada, particularly.

Were there some particular projects or policies or anything that you want to comment on with regard to the East African Community?

HOWE: The overall impression was how powerful nationalism is. Here they were, an area dominated by tribes. Their deepest loyalty was tribes. Then the British overlaid regional East Africanism on them. As you said, for decades that was the going thing. But both tribalism and regionalism had to give way to nationalism. It was so powerful. Once you get a president and a legislature and an army and a police force, you have got a powerful thing. Nationalism triumphed. Really, it's kind of sad, in a way, because they had much in common either as tribes or as a region. They could have gone either tribal or regional and they chose to go national instead.

Now as projects that we had. I was well-impressed with our technicians out there, as a whole, and with our contracts that we had with the universities and others back here in the United States. I thought it was well-run. We, however (”we” being the aid program to the East African Community) were clearly on a withering vine. That spasm of enthusiasm for regionalism that had struck AID when you were there, which compelled you all to cook up some fragile bases for the regionality of some of the projects, had gone. So, I was left with three strong AID Directors and me. It was clear that a lot of the projects that I had belonged to them. Ingenious people had cooked up some remarkable things. So, I took it upon myself to dismantle pretty much, the whole facade, and try to keep just

those projects which went to help the East African government, the dying remnant of the East African government. Since it's headquarters was in Arusha and, although Arusha is less comfortable than Nairobi, I said, “Well, we'd better move our headquarters to where the government is that we're supposed to be giving advice to.” So, I guess that was my crowning achievement. Then I sort of cut and run after I had done that. My deputy, Jim Greene, took over as the AID Director to the East African mission. I don't know whether that still exists or not. Do you?

Q: I don't know. But it may. Arusha is, I think, now something of a locus for international groups and meetings. I suspect there must be a couple of secretariats there.

HOWE: Probably, given the longevity of government agencies.

Q: And the fact that meetings are held there.

HOWE: We should say that the biggest reason for the demise, other than the strength of nationalism in general, which was triumphing over regionalism, the final coup de grace that was administered was the war between Tanzania and Uganda. They just plain went to war with one another. Well, every decision that was made, every project that we had worked with our counterparts to work up and get all documented for AID, had to be approved by the East African executive. Well, who was the East African Executive? It was those three guys, the presidents and Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. When they went to war, they weren't speaking very well with one another and they couldn't have meetings and couldn't approve projects. Therefore, my project, my reason for being there, was declining. So, I came home at the end of a couple of years in 1971.

Move to the Overseas Development Council - 1971

HOWE: 1971. Rudd Poats assigned me over to the Overseas Development Council for a year, one of those assignments that AID has.

Q: Talk a moment about the Overseas Development Council. Why was this done and so forth?

HOWE: The Overseas Development Council was established by Jim Grant, wholly private, to think big thoughts about the Third World, not just the aid program to the Third World, but the trade and investment with them, and other policies that the United States government adopts that have impact on the Third World. They were to do this by the written word and the spoken word and so forth, testimony to Congress and all that sort of thing. So, Rudd assigned me over there. Jim Grant and I had worked together before, so he asked me to come back. I went over and worked for a year on AID's program, and then just transferred as a staff member of the ODC, where I spent a decade.

Q: So, you resigned from AID.

HOWE: I resigned AID and stayed in development with the Overseas Development Council.

Q: For a decade.

HOWE: Yes, until 1980.

Q: That, Jim, is worth discussion. I think you're the only interviewee who will have had that sort of experience. Pick up on the Overseas Development Council and your decade with them, and something about Jim Grant and some of your other colleagues there. I know it was a really first-class think tank.

HOWE: Jim Grant started the Overseas Development Council with private money, which he rounded up from various sources, including industry, and also including foundations. I don't believe they ever ran a fund-raising exercise with the general public. Maybe in later years they did after I left, but when I was there, they had not had a provision for individual membership in the Overseas Development Council.

There were just a few of us. Lester Brown was there, a very celebrated character, and Jim Grant. John Sowell was Jim's deputy. We all sat about thinking great thoughts and rendering them in written form and sometimes in spoken form.

I guess my first assignment was trade with Third World countries. So, I wrote a little thing on trade with developing countries. Generally, we took a very pro-Third World position, which was not surprising. We would find fault with America's policies on trade. One of my big jobs there early on was to write about SDRs (Special Drawing Rights). In effect, the International Monetary Fund was creating money by giving nations rights to draw on reserves, all fictitious, but that's what money is. Except for gold coins, it's all fictitious. So, they created some fictitious money. We took a position that that money should be distributed not in accordance with the formula that they had cooked up, which gave each of the big ones a bigger share of this free money, this free drawing rights. That didn't go anywhere, but it was a lot of fun. Maybe it peaked the consciences of the big economists of the developed world, to realize that things like the riches of the bottom of the sea should not automatically go to the most powerful. It was just taken for granted that the industrialized countries, with America leading the pack, would go out and harvest it. It didn't belong to us, but we'd go out and harvest it and not think at all about rights that other parts of the world might have to these things. So, at least we pricked their consciences a little bit. I don't know whether we ever had any massive effect on it. But those were the lofty things we were going after.

Q: Well, you added greatly to the dialogue of the times. There's no question about that.

HOWE: Perhaps we did that. Caused some guilty consciences, probably.

Q: Yes, but these things don't die.

HOWE: Hopefully not.

Q: The practical conclusions that are made through the mechanisms of statecraft are usually not very inspiring, but you can kick them along and nudge them and sow seeds that flower in a decade or two. I think the ODC's work, and these particular types of things, really did that.

HOWE: Maybe it's budding, maybe it will flower. Who knows? Actually, I was reading something the other day about what's happened in parts of the Third World, Africa excluded, with what trade and investment are doing there that's really picking up the GNP in those countries. Of course, it unfortunately has the effect of widening the gap between the rich and the poor because parts of the people get into the modernized world and parts are left behind. That doesn't mean that the ones who are left behind are worse off except relatively. The gap between them and the ones who are getting better off grows. That's to be lamented, but maybe it's something unavoidable. I don't know.

Q: I think it is. I think that's absolutely right. The poor don't get poorer. That's a very misleading phrase. It very much misleads, I think, people in the West, as to what's really happening. The poor become significantly better off.

HOWE: Two things happen. Once their nose is pressed against the window and they see the largesse on the other side of the window, they feel worse. As television brings us those pictures of their misery, we feel a little guilty, too, about it. So, that's better. I think that's progress, to get those two things to happen. So, forgetting about the gap, which I don't think we've got a handle on, development is moving along. It really puts aid in a different perspective. Aid should not be thought of as something which is going to cause massive development quickly. Aid is just a little thing which is making its contribution to important things, things that would get neglected by trade, like education and subsistence agriculture. There's no quick profit in those things, so trade, and business investment, won't do those things. Aid should long since have stayed with those things.

Q: That's what Harry Truman had in mind.

HOWE: Yes, he did have that in mind, as did L.B.J.

Q: That's what Point 4 was about.

HOWE: It went astray maybe, but maybe not. Rudd Poats wrote a book sometime about the middle of my tour with the Overseas Development Council, which captured very much what had been troubling me all along. He said that we've been in that aid program now for about 20 or 30 years at that time and we've had many, many experiences. We've always gone in to our aid projects in a teaching mode. If we wanted to help a country with agriculture, we knew what had worked in the United States in the field of agriculture. We took the best of that and we took it over there teaching them. Ditto with education. Ditto with health. We had a body of knowledge and we wanted to transfer that body of knowledge to them. He said that we never made a record then of our mistakes as to what worked and what didn't work, and we never learned the lesson that transferring knowledge learned in America overseas doesn't always work. In fact, it doesn't often work. What we should have done is, instead of going over in a teaching mode, we should have gone over in the learning mode. At the time he wrote the book, we had lost, I guess, about 25 years of experience by failing to go in there in a learning mode and saying, “Let's design this project in a way so that we learn results and then let's keep track of those results.” That was kind of what a number of people in AID had been saying all along, but never quite so cogently or publicly as Rudd Poats did. So, we rode that horse for a while in the Overseas Development Council.

Q: I'm making a note here because I'm writing a book on the history of AID and I want to get hold of Rudd's book. I had forgotten about it. I must look at it. In some sense, it's a seminal piece.

HOWE: Right. I don't know that AID ever paid any attention to it.

Q: I was going to ask, did that tie into any of our serious efforts of evaluation?

HOWE: Well, AID had been doing things they called evaluation for a long time. It may have, but again, that's not what Rudd was talking about. What Rudd was talking about was designing the project as a learning experience, not just keep track of what happened. Don't take what we have in America and try to transpose it over there. Go over there and see what their problems are and help them design something that's tailor-made for their country, and keep track of the things that you do to see what works and what doesn't work. Now, this puts American in a much less ego-gratifying role.

Q: Right, it's more collaborative.

HOWE: Much more collaborative, yes.

Q: Jim, it would be helpful, I think, for you to continue (if they occur to you) to identify some of the subjects you addressed in Overseas Development Council. I know we've just picked at them and I know there are a lot of writings and publications that bear Jim Howe and Associates' names.

HOWE: Several years after I joined them, Jim Grant decided to have an annual review, an annual report, of development. We called it the “State of Development - Agenda for Action.” Those came out annually. For two or three of them, I was the editor. Basically, ODC didn't try to do original research. That was being done by Brookings and by a variety of universities all over the place. What we sought to do was to take the work of people deep in the subjects, who were real technicians and really knew what they were talking about, and translate it into something that was understandable by Congress, or interesting to Congress and administrators, and scholars generally - put it in lay language, or in policy language, perhaps. So, we would write these state of the world sort of books each year.

They took up a variety of subjects. One of the things we did was to create an index called the “PQLI,” the Physical Quality of Life Index. That got enough general acceptance or

familiarity abroad and around that people in Washington in very limited circles would know what you were talking about when you said, “PQLI.” That was kind of fun.

Q: Sure, that was a very important conceptual innovation.

HOWE: We also did a lot of work on the gap. We would take the bottom quintile and the top quintile of personal income and try to measure what was happening to the gap. It was clear that the gap was growing. It still is, unfortunately, growing, even in the United States, and something will need to be done about it eventually. My own view is that out of that gap arises problems like violence in the streets and turning to drugs. So many of our social ills are a product of the growing gap. It just doesn't work to have a society that is so bifurcated.

We did some work there in promoting the idea of development banks and were able to- What legislation did we get? I remember testifying and writing testimony, which brings to mind a little, fascinating vignette for me.We did a piece of paper on a development loan fund (international) that we were proposing. Hubert Humphrey took an interest in it and agreed that he would testify on it. So, my job was to take a period of maybe eight minutes while we walked from his office to the Senate room where he was testifying on behalf of this thing. I was to brief him. I briefed him in those eight minutes, all the way along the line. There were interruptions, of course, as he walked down the hall, but nonetheless, he seemed to be focusing on what I was saying. We went into the committee room and they were busy with testimony, but they interrupted everything for Hubert Humphrey. They put him right up to the table and he proceeded to give a testimony. He just reproduced what I had told him in those eight minutes. He elaborated on it enormously. He had such a capacity to absorb. It was really extraordinary.

Q: What an experience. Was he then ill?

HOWE: He was well in those days. He was back in the Senate. He had lost his effort to be the President.

Q: In the early '70s, edging into the mid-70s, did the ODC participate in putting together the so-called "new directions" legislation, which was the new mandate, which did last for a long time and was passed in 1973 on the Hill. It said, "What you really should be paying attention to is the poor majority in contrast to the large farmers and major producers and so forth," not the poorest of the poor (that's a different thing), but the poor majority.

HOWE: I don't think we did. That sounds like it came out of AID.

Q: It was forced on AID by the Congress.

HOWE: I don't think we were behind that.

Q: The one AID person who was heavily involved in it was a person who had already given trouble to AID at old Budget Bureau colleague of ours, Ted Owens.

HOWE: Oh, yes. Now it comes back.

Q: Ted wrote a book called "Development Reconsidered."

HOWE: No, I think ODC had its doubts about that policy. I don't remember if we launched any broadsides against it, but we didn't think much of it. We had a healthy skepticism. You say that has lasted. Has it been beneficent in influence?

Q: Yes, I think so. It's obviously a matter of debate. Further thoughts on the ODC? Further thoughts on Jim Grant? What about Jim?

HOWE: He was just a superb leader. His interpersonal skills were so impeccable, so strong. I can remember sitting in tense arguments where I would hear the silly thing that whoever it was was saying and confront it and Jim would always respond to it by saying,

“That's right, but” and then he would proceed to dismantle it. But he always had a good lead-in to those things. I can remember, when I would write something, and he'd look at it and say, “Oh, this is first-class. I've got just a few little things about it.” It was awful nice of him to say it that way because he would really get at the flaws in whatever I had written and tear it apart. It contrasted with some others who would say, “Oh, dear, I'm afraid this is not going to do at all. I've got to change a comma here and a semicolon there.” But Jim had those massive skills. Of course, he had a big mind. The big thing was that he held so much information and marshaled it in such a way that it was orderly and persuasive and strong. I can remember him being asked to speak and him lamenting that “An hour isn't enough to cover this subject.” It wasn't that he was wandering down little byways. It was that he had so much strong stuff to marshal. He was a good speaker, probably a better speaker than writer. I don't remember that his writing things were as good as the speeches that he made. Both were good. But he had great capacity to lead, to reach Third World leaders and to bring them together. For years, he would gather together world leaders to go to focus on development. He did that in so many different ways. When he was asked to go to head the UNICEF, we all had our doubts about anybody being able to make anything of the United Nations, such a morass to walk into for any person. But I can remember writing something about the fact that, if anybody could do it, make any sense out of it, Jim Grant could, and he did. He took UNICEF and it is so much better than any of the other United Nations instruments. That was, of course, in large part the product of a single man. His unbelievable energy and focus- He was a great guy.

Q: And optimism.

HOWE: Boy, he was so optimistic.

Q: He didn't doubt the existence of all the problems and difficulties, but felt that they could be dealt with.

HOWE: That was his personal strength. He wasn't daunted by the fact that there was so much against us. That didn't bother him a bit. He took off over the fence.

Q: Jim Howe, this has nothing to do with the Third World, but I think it would be of great interest to the readers that, as we conclude, you describe why you left the development field and essentially what you did.

Work with the Solar Energy Research Institute

HOWE: Okay. Dennis Hayes, who was the creator of Sun Day, which is now called Earth Day, if you're familiar with that, a great environmentalist, was asked to go out to the Solar Energy Research Institute out in Golden, Colorado, and to be the director of that. He asked me to go along and be the director of the international program of the SERI (Solar Energy Research Institute). I had become an expert in solar energy. It turns out that, if one writes a pamphlet, he is an expert. After the first oil crisis that, you remember, followed the war, when OPEC cut off all oil to us, and we had long lines waiting to get our cars filled up with gas, ODC decided that we'd better correct a misimpression. People thought that it was the Third World doing this to us. In fact, it was only some OPEC countries, including some who were pretty well off, not Third Worldly at all. So, we wrote about the energy problems of the Third World. I learned an awful lot about their unique energy problems and energy solutions. I learned in the process that part of our problem was that we believed that energy isn't useful and isn't modern unless it's centralized and large and dirty. Well, it's dirty and we accept that. But in order to be modern, we thought (think) it's got to be centralized and large. The Third World wasn't burdened with the electrical and other grids that we have which force us to keep on being centralized. Their source of energy, the sun and the wind and the water and wood, was decentralized. There was a great opportunity for them to build an energy infrastructure that fit not only their needs, but probably fit the global environmental requirements of the future. We did begin to write a great deal about that, so I became a writer in the field of decentralized energy. I moved out to Solar Energy Research Institute, which was probably my worst experience. I had said to Dennis, “I don't

want anything to do with the government. I've had that one. Let's stay private." He assured me, "This is private." So, we went out there. I discovered that the Solar Energy Research Institute wasn't private. It turned out that I had 30 people working for me in the international arena of solar energy. There was an office in Washington which supervised me. They had 30 people to supervise me. So, I wasn't really free from the federal government, from the Department of Energy, which was a morass (the Department of Energy).

It was a horrible place, terribly over-centralized. So, that was a frustrating experience. On top of that, the Reagan administration came in and they subscribed enthusiastically to the notion that energy is not modern unless it's centralized and large and dirty. So, they didn't think much of solar energy, of any kind of renewable energy. They began to cut the appropriation. Dennis Hayes resigned, so I also resigned.

I went back to Washington and started my own consulting business called "The International Renewable Energy Service." We had some fascinating contracts with World Bank and with AID and with United Nations. We took trips around to see the efforts of the Third World to start renewable energy.

About four years after I helped to start it, I was elected as president of NAMI, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. We have two sons who are mentally ill, so my wife and I got deep into that advocacy movement. It turned out that being the president of NAMI was so much more fun than writing these damn proposals to get contracts for the United Nations and AID and the World Bank that I folded my business. I went clear out of the development business in early '85, except for a little visit back now and again on a consulting basis. I went full-time into this other advocacy work, which has been all-demanding. I am amazed that I remember as much as I do about development and those things that happened so long ago.

Q: Amazing, perhaps, but I'm not surprised. I just want to say for the record that Jim and Carol Howe's work with NAMI is extremely highly-regarded by not only the members of

that group, but by others throughout the United States. It's been both a labor of love and concern, but also a labor of extraordinary effectiveness.

Jim, thank you very much.

HOWE: Thank you.

End of interview